



Story and photos by Staff
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A raging fire Jan. 7 decimated 30 acres of forest here in 12 hours. The good news is ... that was the whole idea. Mr. Jeff Sprinkmann, a contractor with the 6th Civil Engineering Squadron's Environmental Flight, coordinated the event.

"The purpose of the prescribed burn was two-fold," according to Mr. Sprinkmann. "First and foremost it reduced the possible dangers that a wildfire can produce. Secondly, Florida's plants and animals evolved in concert with the natural cycles of periodic forest and grassland fires. Fire is essential in maintaining habitat and the balance."

The Florida Division of Forestry was hired to conduct the burn.

Ground-level vegetation wasn't completely wiped out, but only the most well established plant life remained after flames burned most small vegetation. The after effects of the burn weren't limited to ground level. Palm trees were blackened and charred as high as 40 feet up.

"My sincere apologies (go) to those who were in the line of smoke. The wind dispersion, which was supposed to be very good with decent winds, never quite lifted the smoke vertically as much as we had hoped," said Mr. Sprinkmann.



(Top) Mr. Jeff Sprinkman, contractor 6th Civil Engineering Squadron, paddled to the five islands on Lewis Lake to set them ablaze. The purpose of the burn was reducing the possibility of wildfires caused by lightning.

(Above) Mr. Jason Kirkpatrick, 6th CES, ensures the fire is under control during the prescribed burn.



(Left) Dry reeds send up a plume of heavy, black smoke. Commercial aircraft reported smoke from as far away as 50 miles.

(Center) Mr. Dennis Herndon, burn manager from the Florida Division of Forestry, starts the fire after final approval is given at 9:30 a.m. A mixture of kerosene and gasoline ignited the brush instantly.

(Far left) These Saw Palmetto trees might look bad, but they are still quite healthy. In a few months their branches will have grown back in full and they won't have to compete with the weeds.

